Engaging Tribal Communities in Substance Use Disorder Services: Strategies and Best Practices

Deepening trust and cultural awareness in support services

Introductions

Name

Organization/Roll

What Brings You Here Today-Anything You Hope to Learn?

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

Chamay, Yahwíy. Hello and Welcome.

Mendocino County is home to 11 federally recognized tribes and several other tribal communities with deep ancestral ties to the region. These include the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, Cahto Tribe of the Laytonville Rancheria, Guidiville Rancheria, Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, Manchester Band of Pomo Indians, Pinoleville Pomo Nation, Potter Valley Tribe, Redwood Valley Little River Band of Pomo Indians, Round Valley Indian Tribes, Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians, and the Yokayo Tribe. We also acknowledge the Yokayo Rancheria and the Noyo River Indian Community. These communities represent a rich diversity of Pomo, Yuki, Wailaki, Concow, Nomlaki, Cahto, and other Indigenous peoples who have cared for these lands since time immemorial and continue to carry forward traditions of cultural strength, healing, and connection.

Session Outline & Key Takeaways

- Foundations and Decolonial Framing
- Cycles of Addiction
- Representation and Cultural Practices
- Barriers and Solutions
- Communication, Engagement, and Retention
- Accountability and Continued Commitment

Foundations and Decolonial Framing

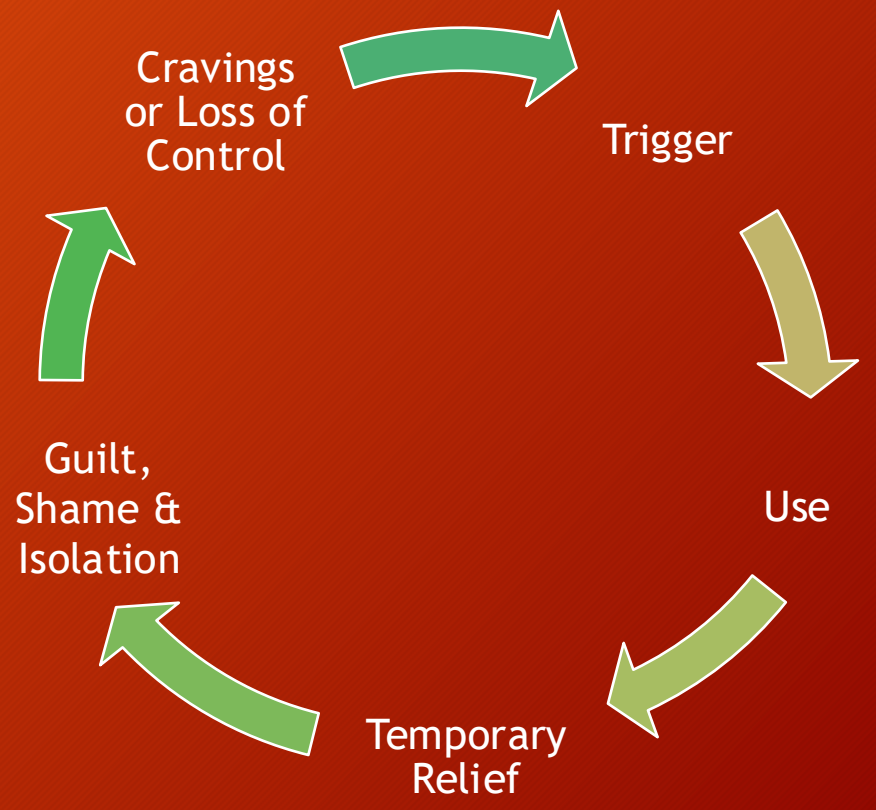
- Historical trauma and colonial harm
- Center Indigenous knowledge as valid, lived evidence.
- Uplift tribal best practices and community-defined wellness.
- Challenge colonial definitions of “health” and “outcomes.”

When Indigenous wisdom is reclaimed as the foundation for healing, the focus shifts from imposed systems to community-based practices that prioritize survival, sovereignty, and self-defined success.

(Cruz, 2016; Echo-Hawk, 2011; Gone & Trimble, 2012)

Understanding the Cycle of Addiction

- The cycle of addiction
- Addiction impacts individuals, families, and entire communities
- In tribal and rural areas, trauma and isolation can deepen the harm
- Addiction often stems from emotional triggers, unresolved pain, and disconnection
- Historical oppression adds weight to substance use and dependency



Representation and Cultural Integration in SUDT Services

Barriers and Solutions

Access to SUDT services in tribal communities is often limited by systemic barriers such as the digital divide, workforce gaps, and restrictive policies. Community-led solutions and partnerships can transform these challenges into opportunities for lasting equity.

Communication, Engagement, and Retention

Collaboration with external organizations, agencies, and health professionals is approached cautiously to ensure alignment with cultural values and community priorities. Partnerships are built on mutual respect and understanding."

–Arlene Brown

Accountability and Continued Commitments

- Accountability means listening, reflecting, and responding.
- Transparency builds trust and strengthens relationships.
- Community-defined outcomes matter as much as funder metrics.
- Feedback must lead to real change—not just reports.
- Sustained partnerships require humility and shared power.

Group Discussion

Thank you for your participation today

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